



**European Parties Elections
and Referendums Network**

REFERENDUM BRIEFING No 18 CROATIA'S EU ACCESSION REFERENDUM, 22 JANUARY 2012

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Key points:

- Following on closely from the parliamentary election of 4 December 2011, Croatia's EU accession referendum was held on 22 January 2012.
- This was the second referendum in post-communist Croatia; the first one had been the country's 1991 vote to declare independence from Yugoslavia.
- It was also the first accession referendum held after the 2003 referendums of the fifth EU enlargement round.
- With a parliamentary consensus over EU membership as the key foreign policy goal, Croatian anti-EU campaigners had no political coherence and were unable to mobilise their target groups to cast No votes in large numbers.
- The biggest surprise was the unexpectedly low voter turnout of only 43.3%, which was lower than in any previous EU accession referendum.
- Nevertheless, institutional amendments passed in 2010 allowed for a valid outcome based only on the majority of votes cast: a 66.27 % Yes votes overpowered the 33.13% cast against accession.
- The voting demographics were surprisingly balanced, with a relatively similar percentage of supporters and opponents of accession found among all age groups. Political affiliation also produced no real differences in voting patterns.

Following the victory of the centre-left in the 4 December 2011 parliamentary election and the signing by the new coalition government of the 'Accession Treaty between the EU and Croatia' on the margins of the 9 December European Council meeting, on 23 December 2011 the newly-formed parliament called for a national EU accession referendum, defining the referendum question as: 'Are you in favour of the Republic of Croatia's European Union membership?'. The incumbents thus chose to set the date of the referendum for 22 January 2012 although this gave them less than two months to organise a coherent Yes campaign. In this way, enough time would be left for EU Member State parliaments to ratify the Treaty

prior to 1 July 2013, the proposed date of Croatia's EU accession. The EU accession referendum was the second nationwide referendum held in democratic Croatia following the one of 19 May 1991 which decided on the country's independence from Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Background

From Yu to EU - initial aspirations

With the war for independence raging on Croatian territory at the beginning of the 1990s as Yugoslavia and communism de-composed, the - seemingly far-fetched - aspiration of the political elites for a *rapprochement* with Europe represented an identity-building gesture to break away from the country's belligerent Easterly neighbourhood. As European countries recognised Croatia's independence in 1992, strengthening cultural and political links with the EU meant legitimating the country's statehood internationally and dissolving the effects of the dire geo-strategic burden of the Balkans. Not even the utter lack of a coherent common voice (let alone concerted action) from the EU side during the war managed to curb Croatian Euro-enthusiasm. Although the EU criticised (again, not in unison) Croatia's first President Franjo Tuđman and the autocratic dimensions of his regime in the 1990s, neither politicians nor the Croatian public took this to heart; support for the EU in the first decade of independence remained consistently high.

However, war-enflamed patriotism begot a dark, nationalist lining which turned it more into a tool of authoritarianism and manipulation, as it became known that the victorious Croatian side had also committed war crimes. The negative stance of Croatia (as both victim and victor country) towards transitional justice, epitomised by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), turned into a milestone of 'Croathood', although it had been Mr Tuđman himself who supported the formation of this UN Tribunal in 1993. Compared to all the other post-communist countries, post-conflict realities became the differentiating factor when it came to Croatia's EU membership prospects. (In Slovenia, the conflict at the dissolution of Yugoslavia only lasted for ten days.) From 2000-2003, as the Social Democratic Party-led coalition government signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and applied for membership in 2003, the EU began conditioning Croatia's each further step towards European integration. And, in a very reciprocal sense, the post-war dimension was turning into the defining reality of the future Croatia-EU relationship.

Nationalism is dead - long live nationalism?

The most likely factor contributing to the change of public opinion towards the EU in the second decade of Croatian statehood was the Union's continued pressure for the country to fulfil the political prerequisite for opening membership negotiations, namely: to extradite Croatian generals suspected of war crimes to the ICTY. The first mild fall in public support for EU membership ensued at the end of 2003, most likely triggered in that year by the anti-EU tendencies played upon by the largest party, the centre-right Croatian Democratic Union, which at that time found itself in opposition for the first time after the country's independence. Facilitated by populism and domestic political forces, initial EU-euphoria turned into resentment, with the opposition Croatian Democratic Union asking: why allow, let alone collude in allowing, Europe to determine Croatia's destiny after the bloody struggle to shed the Belgrade dictate?

During 2004, soon after the Croatian Democratic Union was re-elected after only one parliament spent opposition, a dramatic decline in public support for the EU ensued. It is possible that much of the Croatian resentment towards the EU followed the new government's post-election decision to continue to abide by this controversial EU accession negotiation condition, which the party had dismissed explicitly as a direct threat to national sovereignty while it was in opposition. The Croatian Democratic Union-led government went on to meet the pending bilateral conditions: full cooperation with the ICTY in 2005 and the extradition of Croatian war crimes suspects; facilitating the return of displaced Croatian Serbs; and participation in Western Balkans regional associations such as the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. Soon enough, party political debates on EU membership started proving insignificant, with nationalism as the dominant Eurosceptic category 'smothered' in parliamentary debates by a political consensus over Croatia's EU future and the prerequisites thereof.

As Table 1 shows, in terms of numbers the 72% level of support for EU membership in December 2003 fell to as low as 51% in June 2004, with public support falling continually and reaching its ultimate low in 2009 when only 43% of the public was pro-EU. In 2006, opponents and supporters were evenly divided, with the dominant reasoning among the public continuously clinging to national identity and patriotism, something that the political elites had completely abandoned, at least since the opening of EU membership negotiations in October 2005.

Table 1: Public support for EU Membership

Date	Against	For
1.12.2000	9%	79%
1.12.2001	13%	77%
1.12.2002	13%	76%
1.06.2003	14%	74%
1.12.2003	20%	72%
1.06.2004	39%	51%
1.12.2004	41%	53%
1.12.2005	44%	49%
1.12.2006	45%	46%
1.12.2007	40%	46%
1.12.2009	43%	43%
1.11.2010	35%	52%
1.03.2011	44%	45%
1.05.2011	44%	47%

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (2011), *Crobarometar May 2011*. Zagreb: Ipsos Puls Public Affairs

And although (or, more precisely, since) public opinion did not evolve much in terms numbers since 2004, the actual evolution may have been a more substantive one. Nationalism as an anti-EU factor may have been crucial at the outset, but it was very likely that this was not the sole factor in maintaining the relatively low levels of public support for Europe in Croatia during this period. For example, the ICTY's negative verdict of 15 April 2011 in the case of the two Croatian generals, who were revered at home as war heroes, was expected to resonate as a shock in public discourse and to change the public's stance towards the EU in a

drastic manner. But this did not happen. The polls remained steadily divided, with the dose of scepticism at that point most probably more deeply-rooted, irrespective of the initial nationalist trigger. Moreover, it is possible to identify several other factors at play in keeping popular support for the EU relatively low.

Membership negotiations

The process of membership negotiations between Croatia and the EU was undoubtedly much more complex than all previous ones, both in the elaborate set of criteria and in its methodology. Much was learnt by the EU from the preceding enlargement wave and consequently the bar was set very high. Complex sets of opening and closing benchmarks were defined for almost all of the chapters, with special emphasis on the more 'political' ones such as Chapter 23, *Judiciary and Fundamental Rights*, encompassing requirements directly related to Croatia's post-conflict legacy. As discussed above, the additional factor was that Croatia was the first one of the post-conflict countries of the former Yugoslavia to undertake the process of EU accession negotiations.

Membership negotiations were formally opened in October 2005, the last chapters were closed in June 2011, and the Accession Treaty signed in December 2011. The complexity of the process and its perceived long duration (although, in fact, not longer than in the previous enlargement round, and certainly not than the case of Turkey) had possibly made the goal of membership less attractive to the public. What is more, on several occasions the Croatian Democratic Union government had promised swifter entry, thereby temporarily scoring political points but losing momentum with each new postponement. In addition, the eagerness to keep the public out of the negotiating process by generally not supplying information related to the membership talks may have actually contributed to keeping a significant proportion of the population suspicious towards - and, ultimately, disinterested in - the accession process.

Another important factor that might have turned the public against the EU in the course of the accession negotiations was Slovenia's blocking of membership talks on chapters where working documents containing maps were used by the Croatian side. The Slovenes deemed these maps as prejudicing the outcome of a border dispute inherited from the Yugoslav times over a small speck of sea in the Bay of Piran (Slovenian version)/Bay of Savudrija (Croatian name) in the northern Adriatic. From December 2008 until October 2009, Croatia's accession process was fully blocked, with the EU 'letting' Slovenia play the veto card until its reservations were eventually lifted and an Arbitration Agreement reached, with Slovenia agreeing not to condition Croatia's membership talks on this issue any more. This was perceived as an unnecessary stalemate and a game that the EU side had 'allowed', causing much frustration among the Croatian public and probably adding to the relatively negative trend of EU support. As Table 1 shows, although no data was available for public opinion support in 2008, the 2007 and 2009 numbers were quite similar and the continuation of a balanced division of opinions continued.

Domestic scandals and "imported" PIGS

In the first half of 2009, Slovenia's blockade had been the frustrating factor, but another one may have also contributed to keeping Croats less enthusiastic about the EU. In July 2009, Croatian prime minister Ivo Sanader announced his immediate resignation without stating the explicit reasons, but 'spinning' the information through the media that the Slovenian veto was

the cause. However, shortly afterwards numerous corruption scandals started disentangling which involved state officials, and with Mr Sanader soon on trial for a number of profiteering cases. At the time of writing, speculation was still on-going as to whether international (ie EU) forces actually had a role in forcing him to leave office over corruption issues. Mr Sanader had taken over the leadership of the Croatian Democratic Union after the death of Mr Tuđman and he continued steering it in a very autocratic manner, but after the 2003 parliamentary election did so opportunistically and turned his party increasingly in the direction of Europe. This Austrian-educated polyglot, very assertive in appearance and manners, won the 2003 election on a platform of patriotic demagoguery but, once in power, he (nominally, at least) became the national engine of EU-led reform. By his second term in office which started in 2007, he was adamantly pro-European and the main 'de-Tuđmanising' factor of what was the largest political party in Croatia. Between 2003 and his resignation in 2009, the engagement of the Croatian executive and legislative in the process of *acquis* harmonisation was intense, practising what Mr Sanader dubbed the 'fifth gear' approach towards the EU. When he left office, he was soon replaced and the negotiating process continued just as intensely, but with a bitter feeling of un-ease in the air, especially since the public had come to see in him almost a 'personal' proxy for the EU itself.

Finally, with the outbreak of the sovereign debt crisis in 2008 and 2009, the reduced economic attractiveness of the EU came into play as part of its overall perception and remained a viable argument for Eurosceptics ever since, in Croatia just as in the rest of Europe. With Mr Sanader's resignation and domestic recession becoming apparent at about the same time, watching Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland and Greece gasping for air as they descended into macro-economic instability undoubtedly dampened EU-euphoria among Croats.

Considering such a complex constellation of factors, the threat of a failed referendum became apparent to the political elites still very much reciting the mantra of EU membership as the over-arching national goal. There seemed to be no other solution than to eliminate the prerequisite for a majority of all eligible voters to cast a Yes vote in an EU accession ballot.

The constitutional framework

Within the framework of the membership negotiations, some demands were put on the table by the EU which could only be fulfilled through amendments to the Croatian Constitution. In 2010, these amendments were passed by the Croatian parliament to ensure the following: full independence of the Croatian Central Bank; the extradition of Croatian criminals to EU Member States; and granting voting rights to EU citizens residing in Croatia. Moreover, Article 142, another crucial constitutional provision, was altered in order to allow for the category of alliances with other states to be determined by a simple majority of votes cast and no longer a majority of all voters¹. It thus remained a constitutional obligation for Croatia to hold a referendum on EU accession. However, for this form of direct democracy to yield positive results, the near-impossible provision of a 50%-plus-one turnout of all voters required to make the results valid was amended so that only a simple majority of those voting in the referendum was now a constitutional requirement.

¹ However, the formulation forbidding any provision bringing about the restoration of Yugoslav statehood was maintained. See: Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia (2010). *Clean version of the Croatian Constitution*, available at <http://www.ombudsman.hr/propisi/109-ustav-republike-hrvatske.html> [Accessed: 1 May 2012].

In contrast, Croatia became a NATO member in April 2009 with no referendum held, since entering this alliance was interpreted by law makers as a single-policy international agreement and thus legitimate if ratified by a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Of course, the multi-level nature of EU membership made it impossible to understand this concord as anything but an association with other countries, making the provisions of Article 142 binding.

Whether this move to amend the constitution was interpreted as a justified call in the best interests of the Croatian public or just as a blatant piece of constitutional engineering to rob them of their right to choose their common future, its passage meant that all post-referendum appeals regarding the validity of the referendum were dismissed by the Constitutional Court as groundless.² As far as Croatian politicians were concerned, the restrictive nature of the Constitution in this area was softened and the ground was now prepared for the EU referendum, with less concern about the outcome. In terms of trying to solicit votes, this ultimately meant less effort from the Yes camp - or, in other words, a less informative and targeted referendum campaign.

The Campaign

The Yes campaign, which basically comprised the newly elected government, started on 3 January 2012. Apart from being short of funds, it faced the bigger problem of the short time span between the parliamentary election held on 4 December 2011 and the referendum date of 22 January 2012. However, the newly formed parliament decided not to postpone the referendum with the constitutional amendment that lowered the threshold for it to be valid leading to a more relaxed approach to organising lobbying activity targeted at ordinary citizens.

The previous Croatian Democratic Union government had opened negotiations in 2005 and closed them in 2011, but voices from both sides of the political spectrum had been pro-European throughout so the line on EU membership did not change with a change of government. Given the restricted timeframe for campaigning, the Social Democratic Party, which came to power in December 2011, did not have much opportunity for saying the un-said nor convincing the un-decided. The static non-interactive form of informing the public about the EU had been established by the two previous Croatian Democratic Union governments. So even in the campaign run by the Social Democrats, although brochures and leaflets were distributed, there was a drastic deficiency of direct messages transmitted in the relatively scarce public debates broadcast on private and public TV networks, which only touched upon EU policy issues occasionally.

For example, as noted above, the public had been excluded from, and completely un-informed about the progress of, EU membership talks, with the negotiating positions on each chapter kept secret throughout the process for fear of citizens exerting un-wanted pressure on how the

² The potentially most justified complaint was based on Article 6 of the 'Act on the Implementation of the Constitution', which had not been altered within six months of the passage of the constitutional amendments as defined by law: at the time of the EU referendum it still contained the provision whereby a referendum was valid if 50%-plus-one registered Croatian voters participated. In its verdict on this issue, the Constitutional Court reprimanded such sloppiness of the previous parliament, but it deemed it a procedural mistake and decided that the valid Constitution was still superordinate and directly applicable on the 'Act on the Implementation of the Constitution'.

granting of transitional periods to Croatia would or would not be negotiated. The fact that all of the complex negotiating documents were eventually published in their original form once membership talks were closed did not help much in raising public awareness on EU issues after over half-a-decade of secrecy, and possibly even distanced EU matters from the public even further. In the referendum campaign, these documents were flagged by the incumbent government, but mostly in terms of crude talking points and not in a citizen-friendly, non-technical way.

On the more inter-active side, last-minute pro-EU video messages by ministers who had only just been appointed to office were broadcast on national television, but offered little real content and brought very little added value to the campaign. The peculiarity of the campaign was that even the previous Croatian Democratic Union prime minister was featured in one of the videos in support of the overall cause of EU accession since she had been the one who had formally closed negotiation talks and signed the Accession Treaty. A free 24-hour phone-line was possibly the most direct level of communication between citizens and the administration, an initiative taken over from the previous government, but with sometimes days passing before citizens were given a complete answer on certain topics - and all of this in the middle of the referendum campaign. In addition, with the previous government comprising Euro-enthusiasts and no viable parliamentary Eurosceptic option, the new government willingly took up as their strongest argument that the alternative to EU membership was to remain isolated in the region among the least developed European countries - and that there was basically *no* alternative to the EU. Unfortunately, this argument came across to citizens as overly discursive and patronising.

In general terms, the overall impression of the Yes campaigning in the month prior to the referendum was one of haste and a desire to just 'get it over with' and return to domestic post-election matters. In addition, criticism by some non-governmental organisations was directed at the fact that insufficient space was granted by the government to addressing the reasoning behind some of the plausible arguments against EU membership; which was actually one of the recommendations of the Venice Commission's 2009 Code for Good Practice on Referenda³. In the meantime, citizens were continually bombarded by mixed messages of varied quality regarding the future of the EU which were emitted in the mainstream media - on web portals, in the press and on the TV alike - with the level of sensationalism of the topic increasing exponentially as the referendum date drew closer.

During the campaign, extreme voices from the non-parliamentary margins of the political spectrum and a variety of civil society actors were outspoken against membership. Radical right-wing forces, hard-liners and war veterans were against the EU for identity-based and sovereignty reasons, but younger generations of anti-neoliberal young people triggered by the euro zone crisis had also become rather vocal on questions of self-sufficiency and sustainability, solidarity and the future of capitalism. Nevertheless, there was simply insufficient coordination in the No camp, even though the arguments of all the socio-political streams of opposition sometimes ended up overlapping, such as the ones on anti-globalisation and national self-sufficiency. It can only be speculated what the referendum outcome would have been had the anti-EU camp had the resources and coherence to mobilise more people to go out and cast their votes. However, the crux of the matter was that ultimately voters were

³ See: GONG (2012), *Recommendations of the Venice Commission on Referenda*. Available at <http://www.gong.hr/news.aspx?newsID=3777&pageID=229> [Accessed on 4 April 2012].

not mobilised enough: it was not the ratio between the Yes and No votes but precisely the exit statistics left Croatia perplexed – and probably the EU itself.

The Results

The 22 January 2012 Croatian EU accession referendum was passed by a satisfactory margin, with membership supported by the majority of citizens who came out to vote: 66.27% of the votes were cast in favour and 33.13% were No votes. Most polls actually predicted the numbers for and against (out of those who would turnout to vote) pretty well, usually with a ratio of 60-30, which was what the relative end result was; although the turnout was far from correctly anticipated.

As Table 2 shows, the 2011 surveys suggested that around 80% of Croatian citizens would probably vote in the referendum. However, the actual numbers of ballots cast disappointed even the most pessimistic analysts. Out of a total number of 4,504,765 eligible voters, only 1,959,564 of them actually voted, making this a turnout of 43.51%. Out of this figure, the aforementioned 66.27% of Yes voters implied that only around 29% of all Croats eligible to vote actually gave their active support to their country's EU accession.⁴ Post-election, post New-Year fatigue may have been at play in the country which was a lone candidate state set to enter a self-absorbed, crisis-struck Europe that kept imposing and demanding but it was no longer quite clear what it would give in return. These different sets of circumstances possibly brought about the relative insignificance of the EU cause for Croats, with a turnout that was 10% lower than the 54.32% recorded in the December 2011 parliamentary election held.

Table 2. Response to the question ‘Do you intend to vote in the EU accession referendum?’

Date	Yes	No
1.01.2011	81%	15%
1.02.2011	80%	16%
1.03.2011	78%	18%
1.04.2011	79%	17%
1.05.2011	81%	22%
1.06.2011	75%	16%
1.07.2011	82%	15%
1.08.2011	82%	15%
1.09.2011	82%	15%
1.10.2011	87%	18%
1.11.2011	84%	13%
1.12.2011	82%	14%
1.01.2012	80%	16%

Source: Ipsos Puls Public Affairs, 2012. *Crobarometa January 2012*. Mangjura. Available at <http://www.slideshare.net/manjgura/ipsos-puls-crobarometareu> [accessed on 4 June 2012].

Since 2006, public support for the EU had been evenly divided. So, as Table 1 shows, if one compares the actual numbers who voted Yes to the overall levels of support among the

⁴ See: State Electoral Committee of Croatia, 2012. *Official EU Accession Referendum Results*. Available at http://www.izbori.hr/2012Referendum/rezultati/r_00_0000_000.html [Accessed on 1 February 2012].

general public, it can be said that (as is usually the case) those who did go out and vote were more pro-EU than the general public. Hence the speculation on what would have happened if the anti-EU forces had been better at convincing more people to bother to cast their No votes.

When deciding on their country's independence back in 1991, 83.56% of Croatian voters cast their ballots, with 94.17% supporting the break-up from Yugoslavia.⁵ These figures were dramatically different to the ratio of a 43.51% turnout and a 66.27% Yes vote in the EU accession referendum. One referendum was, of course, about breaking the bonds of a state union on the eve of a war and change of political system, and the other about entering a looser, more abstract and voluntary alliance with more prosperous countries. Notwithstanding the different contexts, these varying percentage differences clearly placed these two state-defining events into perspective. Even without dwelling on the factors that led to such an outcome, these numbers illustrated the (relative) lack of salience of the EU accession referendum issue to the Croatian public.

Moreover, the turnout in Croatia's 2012 EU accession referendum was, in fact, lower than in had been in any other Member State, 'old' and 'new' alike. In addition, out of all of the 'new' ones to have held referendums, and where there was a Yes vote, only Malta was behind Croatia in terms of support for EU accession (54%), although one needs to bear in mind that there was a 91% turnout in Malta compared to 43.51% in Croatia.

Another intriguing factor, especially if compared to trends in previous enlargement rounds, was a demographic one: a disproportionately low number of citizens below the age of 30 (the age group with all the 'tools' to succeed in a 'United Europe') did not support EU membership. This was probably one of the key differentiating elements with other East European countries that joined the EU in the fifth wave of enlargement; the socio-economic benefits such as working or studying in the EU, did not appear to have been a decisive factor among young voters.

Furthermore, given the general consensus among all the parliamentary parties, no distinctions were noted among centre-left and centre-right party voters; the numbers of Yes and No voters were evenly divided in all ideological camps. Moreover, local variations in the votes cast could be identified with the prosperous regions in the North mostly pro-EU, and Dalmatia and Slavonia the most Eurosceptic ones; perhaps because these regions which suffered most during the war in the 1990s and were possibly still very much focused on the possible loss of their hard-regained national identity.

Given the astoundingly low levels of interest in the EU issue, which was heralded for decades by those in power as Croatia's historic goal, it only remained to be seen how the European Parliament elections would resonate in Croatia once EU membership was achieved in July 2013.

Conclusion

With the direct democracy practice of referendums not a standard one in Croatia, judging by the low turnout at the EU accession one, very low numbers of Croats saw this event as a

⁵ See: Croatian Parliament (2005), *Memo on Croatia's Independence Referendum*. Available at: <http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx?art=1767&sec=461> [Accessed on 1 May 2012].

ground-breaking moment for their country. From the initial enthusiasm of the 1990s, this slowly turned into scepticism on the back of post-conflict hardships, internal EU turbulence, global financial and economic crisis, domestic corruption scandals, and excruciating membership accession talks. As a result, prior to the referendum polls suggested that less than half of Croats considered themselves to be pro-EU.

The political conditionality attached to EU membership, linked to post-conflict legacies and the controversies over ICTY cooperation, had, in the mind of the Croatian public, been the initial trigger for this pulled by the centre-right Croatian Democratic Union whilst it was in opposition before 2003. Nonetheless, this remained a factor of limited importance in influencing public opinion towards the EU, given the shift in Croats' political stance in the course of this party's 2003-2011 governments and the steadiness of the general trend of an even split between levels of pro and anti-EU sentiment that was first achieved in 2004 and remained stable at least since 2006.

Of course, what cannot be ignored is the reality of what EU membership meant, symbolically and financially, in 2003 and 2007, and what it meant at the time of the referendum, which was less than a decade after but with concepts such as 'recession', 'eurozone crisis', 'post-neoliberalism', 'bailout', 'eurobonds' and 'fiscal pact' protruding the EU lingo and reality. Croatia's war was behind it, Yugoslavia was a long-dead concept, along with the desire to break away from the communist past. Croatia would also be joining by itself, with no common euphoria to be shared.

The main political milestone of this referendum was thus the extremely low turnout, which was significantly lower than for the parliamentary election in December 2011 and unexpectedly lower than foreseen in any opinion polls and media predictions. Moreover, had the relevant article of the Constitution not been amended in 2010, the 29% of the total number of Croatian citizens with the right to vote who cast their ballots would not have been enough to decide on EU accession. In addition, the rather low level of support among young citizens for the European cause was also a novelty of this referendum. In conclusion, a 'democratic deficit' remained the most dominant after-taste of the 2012 Croatian EU accession referendum in Croatia. It remained to be seen whether after 1 July 2013, the foreseen entry date, this would remain the stigma of Croatian EU parliamentarians as well; would there be any interest from the Croatian public in choosing their direct representatives in Europe?

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This is the latest in a series of election and referendum briefings produced by the European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN). Based in the Sussex European Institute, EPERN is an international network of scholars that was originally established as the Opposing Europe Research Network (OERN) in June 2000 to chart the divisions over Europe that exist within party systems. In August 2003 it was re-launched as EPERN to reflect a widening of its objectives to consider the broader impact of the European issue on the domestic politics of EU member and candidate states. The Network retains an independent stance on the issues under consideration. For more information and copies of all our publications visit our website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork>.